



Rough Rider Roundup



Newsletter of the 204th SB

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NTC preps soldiers for time in Iraq

The USA Today did not dispatch a reporter to cover the arrival of the Alpha Company, 204th guidon at the National Training Center. It was too busy covering the war on terrorism.

As the soldiers from the company, also known as Outlaws, were still settling into their temporary pre-exercise called RUBA, the national paper was reporting the London terrorist bombing that left 56 dead and another 700 injured.

RUBA is short for Rotational Unit Bivouac Area.

The explosions which hit three subway trains and a double-decker bus have the bloody fingerprints of an Islamic terrorist group.

With no television, news was not exactly flowing into the A Co. tent.



When it was time to roll, Trans Platoon gets it done. SSG Dobbins provides a watchful eye as SGT Thomas guides a flat rack into place before the BN departed TAA Kiwi..

What news did make it in was less focused on the world stage and more likely to be about a birth announcement or the impact of a Red Cross emergency message.

But like it or not, the world insistently tapped all of us on the shoulders.

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Black Knights are soldiers in dusty armor

"Boom, Boom, Boom"! It is 1 a.m. and the Forward Operating Base (FOB) was just mortared for the third time in the last twenty-four hours. The soldiers instinctively hit the ground and reach for their helmet and body armor in the dark of the night.

As they place their protective equipment on, they simultaneously check on their fellow Soldiers to the left and right. For the next five minutes, they will remain still to ensure no more mortar rounds are on the way. After all clear is announced they quickly report to their squad leader that they are uninjured



SGT Pytlik shares his weapon expertise with Bravo soldiers. Regardless of MOS, soldiers must provide force protection.

then check their vehicles for any signs of damage. All soldiers are accounted for as well as the vehicles. Then the Soldiers head back to their beds for hopefully a relatively peaceful night of rest. However, we will replay this same scenario repeatedly until it becomes second nature for the soldiers.

This just one of the many training events that the soldiers of Bravo Company, 204th Support Battalion are participating in during their rotation at the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California. Planners at

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Commander's Corner

If you like this, you can expect more

Wanted to send you all a quick note to let you know what wonderful things your friends and loved ones are doing here at NTC. Just so I don't confuse anyone and assuming that your loved one is like me (haven't told the wife a thing) they have told you nothing about what we are doing out here. So let me summarize the scenario we faced.

Within days of arrival we linked up with our equipment and had our supplies on hand; MILES installed (multiple integrated laser equipment system – that allows us to assess battle damage and casualties in a bullet free environment); prepared soldiers to conduct our tactical road march into the desert.

Once we were all MILES up, we rolled out to the maneuver area, some of us taking over 9 hours to get to our support area, and set up operations. We quickly established operations and were able to immediately support the Brigade in its attack against the MEK (Mujahedin El-Khalq – notational bad guys). We supported three major bat-

ties and three battalion live fires in only six days. It was a tremendous accomplishment and the effort exhibited by all Rough Riders that made me very proud. When your friends and loved ones return from the rotation and tell you about the heat we had to battle it was no joke. We had to accomplish all these tasks while battling 116F heat in body armor. No one can say after this rotation that Rough Riders are not rough and tough troopers.

In two days we will begin our redeployment back to Fort Irwin as we end operations, conduct a hand off to the replacement unit, and get ready to come home. The battalion will be busier than ever as we begin clearing the battlefield of broke equipment, move supplies to the rear and turn it in, and fix all the non-mission capable equipment. Couple all this with our need for a good shower and the need to do laundry and again we will be running to get all our tasks completed.

Now for the questions you are all asking, when are my friends, family and loved ones coming home? Look for



Rough Riders ruled the roost.

them starting from the 5-9 of August. The rear detachment will have the manifests and will be able to tell you 12-24 hours out who will be on the plane. Remember this is a window and not a promise. Some will stay a little longer but all will be home before the 15 August.

Finally, as I wrap this up I want to say that you all need to be very proud of the effort and abilities of your Rough Rider soldier. They overcame significant obstacles, learned everyday, and are better trained to survive the conditions we will meet in Iraq. Lastly thanks to all of you who have to endure the tougher end of the deployment by maintaining your households, taking care of kids, and pets, and fighting all the day-to-day obstacles by yourself. You are the real hero's! Thanks for the great work you do so I can keep your soldiers focused on supporting the brigade while we fight our nation's wars.

Sharing information with families important to BN mission

For my first Army deployment, this has been incredible! It has been great getting to know more and more soldiers in our battalion. Watching soldiers in action performing their tasks and skills has been an enjoyable experience.

PFC Joshuwa Clare and I have enjoyed providing services and Bible studies here in the desert. At the same time, we get to share with fellow soldiers the discomfort of being away from family and friends. It is not easy, but we as a family of green help each other out.

As we prepare for Iraq, I can say that



Man cannot live by DFAC food alone.

one of my biggest goals is for families to be able to communicate and share information with their soldier. It is the Commander's Intent to have a battalion website that will be updated monthly with stories and pictures.

More information to follow regarding that website.

As your chaplain, please be assured that I am here to help and assist all of our 204 SB family with any spiritual guidance or help possible. I am here to assist with the Commanders Religious Support Plan.

Psalms 27:14

"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

CH(CPT) James M. Leslie

Battalion Chaplain

Charlie Med provides relief in the Mojave Desert

Greetings from the hot, dry, and fast-paced world of the National Training Center (NTC)! The Archangels of Charlie Company, 204th Support Battalion, arrived July 1 through July 9 to blistering heat, fine sand, and temperatures well above 110 degrees. Over the next week, spirits were high as the company spent five days preparing to "conquer" the National Training Center!

Day 1 of our move out into the "box" claimed a few of the Archangel strong, as the intense heat gained the upper hand. Nevertheless, we set up 100% of our mission-essential equipment and were fully prepared to support the brigade by night's end. In the "box," the training was tough, realistic, and non-stop as our company supported six days of conventional warfare (tank against



Archangels were there when soldiers needed them the most. Litter teams from the other companies helped out as well.

tank). Relentless attacks and having to treat and evacuate 20-50 casualties at one time challenged medics. The military describes this as a mass casualty or MASCAL situation.

Proficiency in this area is fundamental to our success in our upcoming

deployment. In addition, we were confronted with simulated IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices) and VBIEDs (Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices) in a training area comprised of Forward Operating Bases (FOBs), built up towns, and locally-hired townspeople.

Over the course of 14 seemingly endless days and nights, we were pushed to our physical and mental limits, but we pulled together and made it through. At times, we were lonely, homesick, frustrated, and sometimes even angry, but each one of us will leave better trained and better prepared for the rigors of our

pending deployment. With this training complete, we want all of our Archangel families to know, without a doubt, that we are equipped, capable, and ready to support our nation anywhere, anytime, and any way. The Archangels say bring on the next obstacle!



SGT Nunez, along with most of the brigade, was "highly impressed" with the OPFOR capabilities on display during an NTC presentation. (2) PV2 Kim was one of the strong-silent types that stay motivated. (3) SSG Marengo reviews ammo paperwork with PVT Shatzer. (4) SGT Miller works his magic on the commander's digital equipment. (5) A group of Outlaws get ready for a Yermo to RUBA trip.

NTC

"The war on terror goes on," USA Today reported President Bush as saying.

If war is hell, preparing for war is not much better.

"We are going to Iraq. I don't mind. I am ready to go and do my part," said PV2 Javalle Payne, Petroleum & Water Platoon. "At the same time, I do not feel I had enough training at AIT. So I am glad that we are doing this training."

That is in fact the devilish reason for leaving the cozy confines of Ft. Hood to travel to the least California part of California. The company knows it is going to Iraq in November for the next Operation Iraqi Freedom rotation.

"My goal is deploy my company and redeploy them safely," said 1SG Ralph O. Dennis, who now has six NTC rotations under his web belt. "I feel like my goal will be met based on all of the training that the soldiers in the battalion and my company have been doing since I took charge on 7 JAN 05."

And unlike rotations from the past, the grueling training this time around will include not only force-on-force battles; it will also give soldiers a chance to see what life at a Forward Operating Base is all about.

"We are going to run into Iraqis and insurgents. That is most invaluable before we deploy," said CPT Andy R. Clinkscales, A Co. commander. "Instead of just flat terrain, we are going to run into villages. Some of the will be friendly. Some will not be friendly. And some you just don't know. Those are the scary ones."

What is life like "in the box" as the actual game play is commonly called depends on whether the logistic sup-

port soldiers are at a battalion support area (BSA) or forward operation base (FOB). In either case, the first obvious enemy was the heat. You can talk about it all day long in the air-conditioned offices of Ft. Hood, but until the soldiers experience the day-in, day-out thermal punishment, unseasoned troops just don't know what it is like to live in place where a baby wipe is your best friend.

During training day one, the set up of AA Kiwi left about 11 soldiers so exhausted that they were removed from the area for medical reasons. A constant mantra from the command was to keep soldiers hydrated and fed. The heat baked the terrain and the soldiers.

In the following days, other soldiers would suffer smashed hands, pinched finger tips, and nasty-looking heat rashes. When serious enough, Blackhawk ambulances whisked away soldiers back to RUBA for more thorough medical attention.

RUBA was the staging area for the company before it was deployed "into the box." It did have creature comforts like a shower point (way too crowded), a troop store (way too crowded), a laundry mat (way too crowded) and a Thai place (a break from the DFAC). But there was no confusing RUBA with Aruba or any other tropical paradise.

The main reason for being in the RUBA was RSOI or Reception, Staging, Onward movement and Integration. While other units at Ft. Hood decided to pass on deployment to NTC, 2nd BDE knew it was an essential way to work out the bugs in the concept and execution of a large military unit movement halfway around the globe.

"We are getting ready for Iraq. It is

the point of origin for all movement

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—CPT Clinkscales on making
contact with villages



tasks. From home base to destination," said Clinkscales, a graduate from Texas A&M, who listed vehicle loading, rail loading, deployment and individual tasks as important parts of the operation. "We will also work on common tasks we need to survive."

Throw into the mix night driving, punching buttons to fire up the various digital systems and mortuary affairs processing and you have the makings of a very busy time.

A cliché that gets tossed around focuses on how NTC training is so grueling that actual deployment into a combat zone is, if not easy, at least manageable. That was true during Desert Storm more than 10 years ago. That is why A Co. trains so hard.

There is no doubt that helping the Iraqi government get on its feet is hard work. Being away from home is tough. That is part of what is involved when fighting the war on terrorism.

NTC was a quick preview about what we are about to face.

Black Knights

(Continued from page 1)

the National Training Center design the training to be the toughest and most realistic the Army can provide. If there were any doubt about the nature of this training the look of exhaustion on the soldiers faces serves as proof. Even though most of us are beyond tired, we appreciate the training we are receiving. The purpose of this training is to prepare the soldiers and the unit for its upcoming deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. This fourteen-day training exercise is the capstone for the numerous hours the company has been training in preparations for its upcoming deployment. From the early morning PT sessions to the long hours in the motorpool to the countless days spent in the field training, the company has been building towards this training exercise; a training exercise like no other. Our NTC rotation the most difficult scenario ever conducted here by design. All the hard work the Soldiers put in at Fort Hood is paying off. Without a doubt, our soldiers are proving themselves as some of the finest in the United States Army. I personally could not be more proud of the soldiers or the unit.

The mortar attack was just one example of the many training events that has taken place during our NTC rotation. This article lists only the highlights. First, our soldiers are excelling in force protection. Bravo company soldiers are responsible for providing security for the FOB by controlling an entry point and operating two ob-



Planners at the National Training Center design the training to be the toughest and most realistic the Army can provide. Bravo Co was up to the task.



Individually or as a group, soldiers spent much of their time learning something new in the Mojave Desert.

servation points. Even though this may sound easy, it is not. Our soldiers have to be constantly alert because the enemy always poses a threat. They have had to react to VDIEDs, IEDs, infiltrations, and even an enemy tank attack. Each time we have risen to the task and shown that we are dedicated professionals. Additionally, we have conducted many missions outside the normal maintenance operations. Whether we tasked to provide a security gun truck to protect the battalion commander or provide truck drivers to augment A Company, our soldiers were always up to the challenge. All the while, we still provided organizational and direct support maintenance. Wrenches were turned late into the night.

DESETS was running twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. For days, missile maintenance teams shared life with Bravo Company. At any hour of the day, parts are ordered. These are just a few examples of the numerous missions that the Soldiers of B Company were able to accomplish. Overall, everyone can be proud of the job the soldiers did and their ability to accomplish any mission.

It's been hard, but in the end soldiers will emerge with increased warrior skills and renewed confidence in their ability to accomplish their challenge missions. We are all looking forward to coming home and joining back with our families. Trailblazers work hard and love to train, but nothing can compare to being with our loved ones. Almost there!

Rough Riders complete trip, ready to come home to families



Scenes from NTC Rotation 05-08. From lizards to Sergeants Major, the landscape was full of lively critters.

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204th SB, 4th Infantry Division
Ft. Hood, Texas 76544

Phone: (254) 288-6725
E-mail: Wolfgangwannabe@yahoo.com
Comments are welcomed.



Trailblazers replace old concepts with new rules of the road

Day 17: As the battle rages on, the fierce sun recedes momentarily for a brief respite of cool moist weather allowing us to look back and forward on our training experience here at the National Training Center. As a newly minted company, Headquarters and Headquarters Company has emerged from the old "Force XXI" concept into the retooled modularity concept. Gone are the days of a top heavy Headquarters and Distribution Company. HHC provides a leaner swifter solution based on the needs of the Army of today and tomorrow.

Phase one: The RUBA (Rotational Unit Bivouac Area) this is where HHC first hit ground establishing itself operationally and preparing itself for life in the field. The Dining Facility Soldiers wasted little time in establishing their state of the art field feeding equipment and providing hot meals to the Soldiers of second brigade. The communications (S-6) shop had the overwhelming task of troubleshooting the complicated computer systems and satellite uplinks needed to run the advanced digital systems of a digitized



1LT Angie Carter learned a thing or two during this year's NTC rotation.

Tactical Operations Center (TOC) (The brain of the Battalion). This was also where HHC first met the unbearable force of the desert sun. Comfort was in small supply as HHC soldiered through extreme temperatures and long work hours. As nasty as this was it didn't get any better in phase two.

Phase two: High intensity conflict. Here HHC was faced with a new set of challenges to include: relocating the TOC in temperatures exceeding 120 degrees, laying about two kilometers of triple-strand concertina wire around the base perimeter (labor intense),

midnight mortar volleys, and sneak attacks from the Opposition Force (OPFOR) death squads. This portion of NTC gives our Soldiers the training required to survive in the fast paced environment of today's modern battlefield. However this is only half the challenge, which sets us up for the final portion of the exercise.

Phase three SOSO (Sustainment Operations and Support Operations) is the bread and butter of our mission. Providing the battalion the HQ support as it bolsters the effort to win the hearts and minds of the Ft. Irwin natives. These 'natives' are bona fide Iraqi expatriates and actors that have been hired to come here and aid the Army in it's training mission. Also included in this phase is the convoy live fire exercise which has been tailor designed to support troops conducting convoy operations. It involves the shooting down, in real time, of targets from moving vehicles while reacting to other potential hazards. This is some of the most advanced training the Army has to offer.